



Radiology Business  
Management Association

9990 Fairfax Blvd.  
Suite 430  
Fairfax, VA 22030

Direct 703-621-3355  
Toll Free 888-224-7262  
Fax 703-621-3356

March 9, 2017

**VIA ECFS**

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: *Comments of Radiology Business Management Association ("RBMA") on the Petition for Rulemaking and Declaratory Ruling Regarding Prior Express Consent Under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991, GC Docket No. 02-278 and GC Docket No. 05-338.***

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The undersigned (the "Respondent") hereby provides its comments on the above referenced petition (the "Petition") and strongly urges the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") to deny the Petition. By way of background, RBMA (the Respondent) is an industry leader, founded in 1968. The RBMA represents over 2,300 radiology practice managers and other radiology business professionals. In the aggregate, RBMA's influence extends to over 24,000 radiologic technologists and 26,000 administrative staff. RBMA is the leading professional organization for radiology business management, offering quality education, resources and solutions for its members and the health care community, and helping shape the profession's future. Those served by Respondent rely on the ability to communicate directly and efficiently with their consumers and would be seriously harmed by the granting of this Petition.

**I. There Is No Rationale for Granting the Petition.**

**a. *Granting the Petition Would Hurt, Not Help, Both Consumers and Businesses.***

It is unclear to the Respondent whom the FCC would be protecting if it granted the Petition. The Respondent believes there are adequate protections in place currently that protect consumers from unwanted communications and has not been able to ascertain any harm to consumers or businesses that would be avoided, or even minimized, if the Petition were granted. In fact, the Respondent argues that the Petition is overly broad and would affect both service providers and consumers in such a negative way that the net result to both would be harmful. Therefore, the Respondent urges the FCC to act expeditiously to deny the Petition.

**b. *Granting the Petition Would Go Against Established Case Law and Guidance.***

Courts across the United States have consistently held that consent is sufficient when a consumer has simply listed a cellphone number on certain forms or applications.

See e.g., *Reardon v. Uber Technologies, Inc.*, 115 F. Supp 3d 1090 (N.D. Cal 2015); *In re Runyan*, 530 B.R. 801 (M.D. Fla. 2015). This has been expanded to also conclude that provision of a telephone number to a health care provider as part of the hospital admission process amounts to giving prior express consent to receive debt collection calls from medical providers and their agents regarding the debts incurred for the provided services. Consumers “may give ‘prior express consent’ under the FCC’s interpretations of the TCPA when they provide a cellphone number to one entity as part of a commercial transaction, which then provides the number to another related entity from which the consumer incurs a debt that is part and parcel of the reason they gave the number [to the original entity] in the first place.” *Balsden v. Credit Adjustments, Inc.*, 813 F.3d 338, 346 (6th Cir. 2016). Therefore, granting the Petition would be more than a clarification of the law, and instead, would be in direct conflict with well-established case law and prior guidance.

*c. Granting the Petition Would Go Against the FCC’s Prior Guidance.*

Further, The Respondent strongly believes that denying the Petition is consistent with the FCC’s expressed reluctance to “unnecessarily restrict consumer access to information communicated through purely informational calls.” *Rules & Regulations Implementing the Tel. Consumer Prot. Act of 1991*, Report and Order, 27 FCC Red 1830 ¶ 21. Patients regularly provide their phone numbers to “covered entities” and “business associates” (as those terms are defined in HIPAA) to make it easier for the patients to obtain information about their treatment, payment or other health care concerns. Health care service providers are able to more effectively assist patients when they have various means by which to directly communicate with those patients. Many times, patients are not aware that the services they receive in a hospital setting are often rendered by different provider groups and that they will therefore receive separate bills for such services. Thus, allowing covered entities and their business associates to rely on one set of information, the demographic information provided by the patient at the time of service, affords them the opportunity to educate the patient about the billing process and ensure that the patient understands the amounts he or she is being charged.

**II. Denying the Petition Would Benefit Consumers and Businesses.**

*a. Consumers Rely On and Expect Telephonic and Text Communications.*

The Respondent agrees with the FCC that it is vital to protect the privacy rights of consumers, but believes there is no benefit to consumers in this regard by granting the Petition. In today’s world, consumers are accustomed to providing their phone numbers to various entities for various purposes, and do so in order to expeditiously receive information they deem important. For example, consumers often provide their cellphone numbers to service providers, both medical and otherwise, in order to receive reminders of important upcoming appointments so they will not miss them; and they provide their cellphone numbers to airlines so they can be notified in real time of any changes to their flight status. The ability to receive information in real time has become a great benefit and convenience to consumers, and the Respondent would argue that it is one on which many consumers rely. In fact, many consumers complain to service providers when they do not receive a phone call notifying them of important information. Additionally, in the medical debt collection context, consumers appreciate the notice regarding an amount due so they are able to remedy the matter before they are sent to collections.

b. *There Are Adequate Provisions in Place Currently to Protect Consumers.*

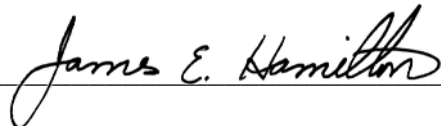
There is a very important difference between “robocalls” and calls from a company with which the consumer has a relationship. Respondent agrees that the FCC should protect consumers from unwanted spam, but argues the current FCC rules are sufficient in this regard. Covered entities and their business associates just want the ability to contact their patients for the best and most benign reasons, such as to provide health information, schedule appointments and help them make payments. There are various safeguards in place that protect consumers from unwanted communications, including those related to the permitted nature of consumer contacts and those requiring simple and immediate opt-out mechanisms. The current FCC rules provide consumers with a choice in how they want to be contacted by preventing service providers from contacting them without their consent. Health care service providers simply want the ability to continue to contact their consumers in an efficient manner, the way that many prefer and often the only way they can be reached – via phone call or text. Granting the Petition would make it more difficult for consumers to obtain critical information, including health care related information.

c. *It Would Be Bad Public Policy to Grant the Petition.*

Further, the Respondent argues that there is no legal or policy reason for the FCC to grant the Petition. It is a critical public policy goal to provide effective and efficient medical care to all patients. Granting the Petition would place an unnecessary and unintended burden on the health care industry and reduce its efficiency. Service providers would be required to expend more money and deploy more resources in order to simply communicate with their patients, and patients would have to wait longer to receive critical information and would have fewer choices in determining the format in which they want to receive such information.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide reply comments on this important matter. If you have questions or if you need additional information, please contact the undersigned.

***Radiology Business Management Association***

By: 

Name: James Hamilton, MHA, CMM, FRBMA

Title: President, RBMA Board of Directors

Phone: 937-433-7622

Email: [jhamilton@mipimaging.com](mailto:jhamilton@mipimaging.com)